

7th Year Follow-Up Report Procedures

Professional Services Division

August 2008

Overview of this Report

This report provides an opportunity for the Committee on Accreditation to discuss and clarify its expectations with respect to the 7th Year follow up report procedures. The discussion will serve to assist staff in drafting language to include in the *Accreditation Handbook* with respect to the 7th year follow up report.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the COA direct staff to draft language for the *Accreditation Handbook* that clarifies what the COA expects from institutions required to submit a 7th year report. In this way, institutions, the COA, and the Commission staff will have a common understanding of the conditions under which an institution will be required to submit a 7th year report and of the review procedures related to 7th year reports.

Background

The revised accreditation system is comprised of a seven year cycle of accreditation activities. On an on-going basis, each institution is expected to collect, analyze, and use data on candidate outcomes, performance, and program effectiveness for program improvement and for reporting this information to the Commission in the biennial reports in years 1, 3 and 5 of the cycle. In year 4, a program assessment is conducted to ascertain whether an institution is meeting the adopted program standards. In year 6, a site visit is conducted reviewing the institution's adherence to the Common Standards as well as confirming or rejecting the findings from the preliminary program assessment reports conducted in the 4th year. In establishing this cycle, the COA and the Accreditation Study Work Group determined that institutions must address issues raised during the accreditation process, particularly in the year following the site visit. As such, the possibility of follow up was built into the accreditation cycle in the 7th year. The COA noted its desire to have greater assurance than in the past about what institutions were doing to address issues raised in the accreditation team's reports.

Although an assumption of the new accreditation system is that all institutions, in the year following the site visit, will ensure that issues raised during their accreditation visit, at this point in time, procedures have yet to be developed to explain the 7th year report process; who needs to submit a report, what should it address, and how is it reviewed. Given that this will be the second year of a full schedule of accreditation visits since the resumption of accreditation site visits, it is appropriate that policies and procedures be developed around the 7th year report.

Proposed Policies and Procedures Regarding 7th Year Follow Up Report

The following are proposed policies and procedures regarding the 7th Year Follow Up report in the revised accreditation system for the COA consideration and discussion.

- 1) For the revised accreditation system, it is agreed that institutional follow up activities are required of all approved institution in the 7th year of the cycle, while a follow up *report* is not necessarily required of all institutions.
- 2) In the 7th year of the cycle, all institutions are expected to address issues raised by the review teams (program assessment and site visit team) and the COA during the accreditation process. This means taking action within the policies and procedures of their institution to rectify and/or address issues related to Commission adopted standards. If an institution has no issues identified by the review teams, it is still expected that institutional personnel continue to review candidate assessment data and available program effectiveness data with the objective of program improvement.
- 3) Any institution granted “Accreditation with Stipulations” must complete a 7th year report as part of the accreditation review process. This report will be used by the accreditation review team, along with any information collected during a revisit, if a revisit has been required, to determine progress made in addressing issues, and by the COA to consider removal of stipulations in the subsequent year. Each institution will submit its 7th Year Report by the 15th of the month in which the accreditation visit began the year prior.
- 4) Institutions granted “Accreditation” (e.g., with no stipulations) may or may not be required to provide a 7th year report, as determined by COA. Although an institution may not have received stipulations, the revised *Accreditation Framework* provides the COA with the flexibility to require follow up regardless of the accreditation decision. If the COA wants the institution to document that it has ameliorated the issues identified in the accreditation process the COA can choose between two options: 1) the institution may be required to submit a 7th year report; or 2) the institution may be directed to address the issues in the next submission of the institution’s biennial report.
- 5) When determining whether a 7th year report is necessary for institutions granted accreditation with no stipulations, the COA should consider: 1) whether the information it wants to see would normally be provided in the institution’s biennial report, and 2) whether the due date for the biennial report is sufficiently timely to the satisfaction of COA. In particular, Section A. Part I of the Biennial Report asks institutions to, “*Please provide general information to help reviewers understand the program and the context in which it operates. As part of your response, please complete the candidate table below. Then, please briefly describe what has changed significantly since the Commission approved the current program document.*” In some cases, the information requested by COA could be provided in this section of the biennial report.

If the information the COA desires is consistent with the purpose of the biennial report, the action taken by the COA could include language that identifies the issue(s) the COA would like addressed in the biennial report in year 1 of the new cycle.

Alternatively, if the COA wants a more timely response to issues raised during the accreditation process or if the biennial report does not lend itself easily to the kind of response that the COA deems necessary, the COA could require a 7th year report in the accreditation decision action.

- 6) To ensure appropriate and timely adherence to its requirements, the COA must explicitly state in the accreditation decision action whether or not it wishes for the institution to submit a 7th year report. If the COA determines that a 7th Year Report is due from an institution; it will be due by the 15th of the month in which the accreditation visit began the year prior.
- 7) If the COA determines that it will grant accreditation with no stipulations but wishes to indicate that a 7th year report is required, the COA will need to be explicit in the action taken about what specific issue or concern must be addressed in the 7th year report.
- 8) Staff will ensure appropriate tracking and follow through, as with all stipulations and accreditation decisions, to ensure that all issues identified by COA are appropriately addressed within the timeframe set forth by COA.

The chart below may be helpful to the COA in its discussion of this issue.

	Institutions with Stipulations	Institutions with No Stipulations	
7th year follow up report required	Yes. Institution will submit documentation noting how they have addressed all stipulations.	Yes if: 1) information requested is not typically reported in biennial report; or 2) COA needs information prior to submission of year 1 biennial report.	No if: Information requested by COA can be reported in the biennial report, and 2) COA is satisfied that timeframe for reporting in Year 1 of new cycle is sufficient
Review Process	COA consideration for removal of stipulations and accreditation decision.	Staff review and provide a summary report to COA.	Staff review during regular biennial report process. Staff report to COA in regular biennial report summary process.

Next Steps

Commission staff will take direction from the COA and draft language related to the 7th year report to include in the Accreditation Handbook and to post on the Commission's website, where appropriate, to ensure a common understanding of the 7th year reporting process.